

areas of America, and I gave Congress a plan to educate 35,000 bright young people and then let them pay off all their student loans by going into our hardest pressed areas and teaching for a few years. These are good ideas. They'll make America stronger.

I embrace Senator Carol Moseley-Braun's idea that we ought to have more places doing what Chicago's doing and building new schools and repairing old ones. So I gave the Congress a bill that says, let's tear down and rebuild or repair or build 5,000 schools. And here's a plan to do it, paid for in the balanced budget act.

All of these things are in this education bill. I gave them a plan for safer schools through more partnerships with local law enforcement. I gave them a plan to hook up every classroom to the Internet by the year 2000 so that every child can have access to the world of learning now on the Internet, and every child can have access to the wonders of computer technology. So far, Congress has not responded.

I gave them a plan for most charter schools, for better rewards for our more committed teachers, to do more to train teachers, to make sure we have certified master teachers in all the schools of America. Without touching a dime of the surplus, we did all that. So far, Congress has not responded.

So I say to you here in Chicago, you are doing your part, and its time Washington, DC, did its part to help you succeed. That is our commitment to you.

There are a few days left in the congressional session. It's not too late. It's not too late for Congress to put aside the lure of election year and save Social Security before we spend the surplus; not too late to give all the patients in this country the protection of a Patients' Bill of Rights; not too late to keep our economy growing by protecting us against the troubles in the global economy and doing what we can to turn it back; not too late to reaffirm our commitment to a clean environment; and most important, not too late—not too late—to pass this education agenda so that every child has a chance to be part of the miracle of his or her own learning. That will be the surest way to America's greatest years in the 21st century.

Good luck, young people. Make the most of it. Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Gina Borner, sixth grade student, who introduced the President; John Stroger, president, Cook County Board of Commissions; Gery Chico, president, Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees; Paul Vallas, chief executive officer, Chicago Public Schools; Sandra Satinover, school principal; Joanne Alter, chairman of the board, Working in the Schools (WITS); Representative Glenn Poshard, candidate for Governor, and his wife Jo. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Luncheon Honoring Gubernatorial Candidate Glenn Poshard in Chicago

September 25, 1998

Thank you. I don't think Glenn can hear us, but I want to say that if I were a school principal today, I would happily give him an excused absence from this lunch—[laughter]—because I, too, wanted him to be in Washington. Finally, after almost 9 months now, 8 months, of virtual complete inaction, some votes are being cast in Congress. And I think this decision that is before the Congress today is terribly important.

We're quite close to an election. In a week we'll have the first balanced budget and surplus we've had in 29 years. And the majority party wants to make everybody happy close to an election by passing a tax cut. And believe me, I'd like to make everybody happy close to an election, too. Even though I'm not running, I've got a lot of friends on the ballot. But it's not the right thing to do.

We have a tax cut in our balanced budget for child care, for education, for the environment, but it's paid for. But you know, we have waited 29 years, and we have worked hard for 6 years to get this country a balanced budget. It has been instrumental, pivotal in bringing the country back economically. And before the red ink turns to black and it dries a little bit, people now want to turn around and spend it again before we do what I think must be our first priority, which is to save Social Security.

There are a lot of younger people here, and I thank you for being here. But if you've looked at the demographics, you know that when all the baby boomers retire—that's me and everybody 18 years younger, people between the ages of 34 and 52—when we retire, we'll be the biggest group of retirees ever to pack it in at one time in America. And at present rates of work force participation, immigration, and birth, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security.

Now, we know that right now. We also know right now the Social Security system alone accounts for taking half the seniors in this country out of poverty and giving them a dignified life, and also relieving their children and their grandchildren of the enormous financial burden of supporting them.

If we act now, we can make modest changes in the Social Security system, using the surpluses—maybe not all of them but some of them—and we can avoid a train wreck. If we don't act now and we just wait for something bad to happen, we'll have one of two choices a few years down the road as a nation. Number one is we can decide we're going to keep the same system in the same way, in which case people like me will be sick because what that will mean is, in order to maintain the standard of living of the elderly, we will reduce the standard of living of our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. Or we can say, no, we're not going to do that, and let the elderly poverty rate go way up again because we'll have to slash Social Security by a huge amount.

There is no reason to do that. If we start now we can make a sensible, modest reform which will reflect the changing composition of our population. That's what Glenn Poshard is up there doing.

Now, I know a little bit about being Governor; I was a Governor for 12 years. Somebody said I could never get a promotion. I was a Governor forever, it seemed like. I loved it. But I can tell you that if you're sitting there every day, making decisions that no one else can make, you have to do some things that don't please everyone in the short run because you know that they are right for the long run interest of your State.

Here he is, just a few weeks from the election, Glenn Poshard went back to Washington, DC, to vote for the security of our country 20 years down the road, in the teeth of an election, by saying "We have waited 29 long years. We have worked for 6 years. We've got this balanced budget, and we're not going to squander this surplus until we save Social Security first." On that alone he deserves to be elected Governor.

I want to thank Mike and Jim and Glenn and all the others who were responsible for selling tickets today. I told Mike Cherry he's been to so many of my fundraisers, he's the only guy I can think of, that if we get a Republican administration in and the stock market goes down, his income will go up just being free of the fundraisers. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for coming. I want to thank Mayor Daley for his leadership and friendship. And Mike Madigan, thank you for being here and for your leadership. And Minority Leader Senator Jones and all the members of the legislature, I thank you. Mary Lou, thank you for running with Glenn and for your background in health care, which will be, I think, an enormous asset to this ticket, after the election, serving, because more and more, we're going to have to deal with all kinds of complicated health care questions.

Again I say, as a Governor, we can do a lot nationally on health care, but there are a lot of questions which will have to be made at the local level. I'll just give you one. When we passed the Balanced Budget Act in 1997, we put funds aside to provide aid to the States to provide health insurance for 5 million children in the families of lower-income working people. That is, children who are on welfare already get covered by Federal health care, and people who have good, solid jobs usually have health insurance with the job. But increasingly, more and more people have jobs that don't have any health insurance for their family. We put in the balanced budget funds that will give these working families the ability to insure their children, 5 million of them throughout America. But the programs have to be designed at the State level and implemented at the State level. It's another good reason to vote for Glenn and Mary Lou, because I know Glenn Poshard

voted for it and I know he's committed to it, and he'll do a good job.

I want to thank Jo and all of her family for coming. Running for Governor is a family endeavor, and, believe me, serving is a family endeavor, and I thank you for doing it.

You know, I'm deeply indebted to the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago. I might well not be President if it hadn't been for Illinois and the stunning vote that we received here on St. Patrick's Day in 1992. If you ever come to visit me in the White House, I'll take you back to my private office, and up there's a picture of Hillary and me in Chicago on St. Patrick's Day in 1992, with all the confetti coming down.

And I would just like to say to all of you who had anything to do with this administration, but especially to our terrific Secretary of Commerce, Bill Daley, to my friend, Kevin O'Keefe, who worked with me for many years, and to all the others from Chicago who participated in our endeavors, I am very grateful.

I also want you to know that I'll have a hard time holding on to this Cubs shirt—[laughter]—when I get out to California tonight and Hillary sees it. [Laughter] She's in Oregon today campaigning for some of our candidates that we're going to meet tonight in California and spend a day with our daughter tomorrow. But we're thrilled with the success of the Cubs this year and, obviously, with Sammy Sosa. You know, this home run race has been good for America, and it's been great for baseball. But it makes us—now, we're sitting there—it's interesting, there is a little psychological lesson here, though—we're all sitting there saying, "Now, why haven't they hit another home run?" [Laughter] They just hit 65. Nobody else ever did it. Now we wake up every day and we expect them to hit a home run. But I want to ask you to think about that in terms of this election season.

If either Mark McGwire or Sammy Sosa announced that even though there were three games left in the season, 65 was enough and get off their back and they were just going to sit out the games, we would think they had lost it, wouldn't we? We would be disappointed. We would be a little angry.

And we would think they were downright foolish.

But if you think about where we are today as a country and you think about the pattern of democracies when times are good, essentially some people are betting on the fact that a lot of Americans will sit out the election, on the argument that things are doing well and the country is going in the right direction. I've told many people—I thank you—so many of you said wonderful things to me and, through me to Hillary, today when we visited. But the enemy of the forces of progress in this election is not adversity. Adversity is our friend. Our enemy is complacency.

If I told you 6 years ago that in 6 years we would have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years and 17 million new jobs—just under—that we would have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, that we would have the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years, that we would have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation rate in 32 years, the highest homeownership in history, the lowest African-American poverty rate ever recorded, the biggest drop in Hispanic poverty in 20 years, with the smallest Government in 35 years—if I told you that, you would have said, "What planet is he from?"

But the American people have achieved that. And our policies have supported that. It all began—I'd just like to remind you again, one more time—with one vote in 1993 for an economic program that did not have a single, solitary vote from the other party, that drove down interest rates and reduced the deficit by 92 percent before the balanced budget bill passed with bipartisan support last year.

That bill also contained something called the earned-income tax credit—we doubled it. It's a tax cut for working people who have modest incomes. Single workers get a little bit of money out of it, but most of the money goes to people who have modest incomes, who have children in their homes. And their taxes now—if your income is \$27,000 a year or less and you have a couple of kids at home, your taxes are about \$1,000 lower than they would otherwise be now because of that. We learned yesterday from the Census Bureau

that 4 million working Americans were lifted out of poverty last year—4 million.

So we have proved that you can grow the economy, have record numbers of billionaires, have record numbers of new businesses, but that the people who are out there struggling to make ends meet can do well at the same time. And I'm very proud of that. I believe in that.

And as I said, along the way we passed the family and medical leave law, gave health insurance to 5 million people, gave a \$1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college and other tax credits for other college education, made student loans deductible, created more Pell grants, put 100,000 police on the street, cleaned up toxic waste dumps, made the food safer, the air cleaner, and the water purer. That's good news.

It would be a great mistake to say, "We have hit 65 home runs, we think we'll sit out the next few weeks." Why? First of all, because the country still has serious challenges. This Social Security challenge is a big challenge. Another big challenge is to keep the economic recovery going in the midst of all this global financial turmoil.

When you read in the newspapers or see on the evening news about this debate we're having about the International Monetary Fund and you never thought about the International Monetary Fund before, just know that that's what we contribute to to help countries that are trying to get on their feet and to help prevent countries that are doing well from getting the financial flu that's sweeping the world, so that they in turn can buy our products and keep our people working. It's a big issue.

We just came from the Jenner School, as the mayor said. Education is a big issue. If there were no other reason to vote for the Democrats this year, it would be on education. We have a program sponsored and conceived by Carol Moseley-Braun, to modernize, repair, or build 5,000 schools. No action on it yet in the Congress.

We have a program to reduce class size to 18 in the first three grades, put 100,000 teachers out there. No action. We have a program to educate 35,000 bright young people and then let them pay their college loans off by going into the inner-cities and teaching.

No action. We have a program to hook up every single classroom to the Internet by the year 2000, so that all kids, without regard to their backgrounds or their family's incomes, have a chance to be a part of the emerging information economy. No action.

But Glenn Poshard supports it, just like he supported all my education bills. And it's a big issue. So I say to you, the country has got a huge choice to make. One is, will we be apathetic or intense about building our future and building on what we've got. The second is, when we make these choices, what's going to dominate our thinking? Are we going to be for partisanship or progress? Are we going to be for politics or for people?

You know, when I go around the country and I speak for people that I believe in, almost none of them agree with me on every single issue. I never ask anybody to agree with me on everything. I couldn't possibly be right about everything; neither could you; and neither could they. But I do think that we want people in office who wake up every day thinking about what it's like to struggle to make ends meet. Look at the record of the Congress. We're a week from a new budget year. They pass one of the 13 bills it takes to keep the Government going—one. They're 5 months late on a budget resolution.

But they've killed a lot of things. They killed campaign finance reform. They killed the tobacco legislation designed to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco. They killed a Patients' Bill of Rights rights designed to make sure our medical decisions are made by doctors and not by insurance company accountants. And last week, with the unemployment at a 28-year low and no inflation, they killed an increase in the minimum wage for 12 million workers.

Now, I don't believe we should be embracing those policies. I believe we ought to say we want everybody to be a part of this. We're for saving Social Security, passing the Patients' Bill of Rights passing the education agenda, protecting the environment even as we grow the economy, and we are for doing what it takes to keep this economic growth going and making sure everybody gets to participate—everybody gets to participate.

So I ask you to think about all that. And when I talked to Glenn on the phone this

morning before I came out here, he reminded me of some time we spent together way back in 1986. That seems like—I still remember 1986, but vaguely now. [Laughter] And he and I, as you heard him say, were on something called the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission. Why? Because the Lower Mississippi is the poorest area of America.

And we started in Illinois, in Southern Illinois, and went all the way to the mouth of the Mississippi, past New Orleans. And we went up and down the length of that great river, into little towns and to rural areas, talking to people about what we needed to do so that they could lift themselves out of poverty, so they could educate their children. Now, 12 years later, a lot of the things that were nightmares to us then are problems that are being solved.

This is a better country than it was 6 years ago. And if we bear down and choose progress over partisanship in this election, it will be better 2 years from now. But I want you to understand that it requires you to be vigilant. It requires you to say, “We are going to build on what we have done, not rest on it.” And I will say again, I served as a Governor for 12 years. We’ve got the smallest Federal Government we’ve had in 35 years. I’m proud of that. But as a result of our policy, it is now more important who the State Governors are, not less, because it’s education, it’s health care, it’s the environment, it’s the economy. It matters.

So I ask you to go out here in the remaining days of this election—we’re got several weeks—and first of all, send a message to Congress that you’re tired of the partisan politics and you’d like to be considered first; you’d like for people to think about everybody outside of Washington, not everybody inside of Washington. You’d like to think about our future and our children.

And secondly, go out here and talk to your friends and neighbors and tell them that we’ve got a good ticket for Governor and Lieutenant Governor, and they deserve their consideration. They deserve their vote. They deserve their support, and there’s a lot riding on it for the future of your children.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. in the auditorium of the Mercantile Club. In his remarks, he referred to Mike Cherry, co-chair, Democratic Business Council; Jim Levin, event co-chair; Mayor Richard M. Daley; Michael Madigan, speaker of the house, and Emil Jones, senate minority leader, Illinois State Legislature; Mary Lou Kearns, candidate for Lieutenant Governor; and Jo Poshard, wife of Representative Glenn Poshard.

Statement on Hurricane Georges

September 25, 1998

Hurricane Georges, which is bearing down on South Florida, has already cost many American citizens their lives in Puerto Rico, as well as caused huge human and material harm throughout the Caribbean. As we prepare for the impact of the storm on the mainland, we are working to bring relief to those already affected by the storm, and to help them to begin rebuilding.

Yesterday, I declared Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to be disaster areas. Already, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has sent over 200 emergency relief workers to assess the damage. I have sent Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo and Small Business Administrator Aida Alvarez to Puerto Rico, to report to me on what further steps need to be taken. We are gravely concerned about the loss of life and property in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and will continue to work at the highest levels to bring the islands and their people back.

We are also working to help those affected outside our borders. Yesterday, I sent an emergency response team from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, together with relief workers and supplies. I have asked Hugh Palmer, the head of Humanitarian Response Programs at the Agency for International Development, to go to the Dominican Republic this weekend to assess the damage, supervise our efforts, and report to me on what further should be done.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have felt the force of this storm.